



Nathan Deal
Governor

Bobby Cagle, MSW
Commissioner

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**DECAL appointing task force, working with law enforcement to improve
Georgia's Childcare and Parent Services (CAPS) Program**

*Agency taking aggressive action to improve child care subsidy program and prosecute those
who would commit fraud*

*Department of Audits and Accounts found need for improved business practices
in program from FY 2008-2011*

CAPS Program moved to DECAL in July, 2012

ATLANTA, Ga., (March 15, 2013) – A recent state audit of the CAPS program from FY 2008-2011 found a need for improved business practices in Georgia's Childcare and Parent Services (CAPS) Program. Bright from the Start: Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning (DECAL) is working with state and federal law enforcement and appointing a task force as part of a major review and overhaul of the CAPS Program.

The over \$200-million CAPS program provides subsidized child care to low income families, currently serving 46,000 children per month. On July 1, 2012, the CAPS program moved to DECAL from the Georgia Department of Human Services (DHS) Division of Family and Children Services. Governor Nathan Deal directed the move as part of his FY 2013 state budget.

“Both DECAL and DHS welcomed this audit and share the auditor’s concerns,” said DECAL Commissioner Bobby Cagle. “The CAPS Program benefits the most needy families and children among us. This level of performance is unacceptable and we are working together with Commissioner Clyde L. Reese and his staff, as well as other agencies, to address and rectify all findings.”

Commissioner Cagle added, “Overall, considering the size of this program, the amount of money involved may be a relatively small percentage. However, no amount of waste or fraud will be tolerated. We will continue to turn these cases over for criminal prosecution and seek restitution wherever possible.”

DECAL had already initiated major changes to the CAPS Program including appointing a new Child Care Development Fund (CCDF) Administrator; starting the expansion of DECAL’s audit and compliance team; working with the State Attorney General, Georgia Bureau of Investigation (GBI) and federal authorities to prosecute those who would commit fraud; and using enhanced technology to better administer the program.

Among its findings, the audit recommended:

- Verifying each applicant’s employment and income
- Reviewing all cases of alleged fraud and abuse
- Identifying improper payments
- Strengthening the exemptions process
- Reviewing the process for criminal background checks
- Verifying participants’ lawful presence in the United States with Secure and Verifiable documents as required by law
- Revising the method of allocations to counties

Commissioner Cagle said a new 45-member task force, facilitated by a national expert, will review operations, policies and procedures of the CAPS program over a six month period beginning in April, 2013, and then make recommendations to DECAL for improvements.

“As the lead agency since July 2012, DECAL accepts responsibility for correcting the noted deficiencies and will create a detailed corrective action plan to address all findings,” said Commissioner Cagle. “This will include increased training for staff responsible for administering CAPS across the state, enhanced use of technology, and improved oversight. In addition we are expanding our internal auditing function and exploring a partnership with the GBI to increase investigations, prosecutions and fraud prevention.”

The full state audit report can be found at www.audits.ga.gov. For more information on CAPS, visit <http://dec.al.ga.gov/QualityInitiatives/CAPS.aspx>.

About Bright from the Start: Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning

Bright from the Start: Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning (DECAL) is responsible for meeting the child care and early education needs of Georgia’s children and their families. It administers the nationally recognized Georgia’s Pre-K Program, licenses child care centers and home-based child care, administers Georgia's Childcare and Parent Services (CAPS) program, federal nutrition programs, and manages voluntary quality enhancement programs.

The department also houses the Head Start State Collaboration Office, distributes federal funding to enhance the quality and availability of child care, and works collaboratively with Georgia child care resource and referral agencies and organizations throughout the state to enhance early care and education. For more information, go to www.dec.al.ga.gov.